

DREAMVISION DREAMY ♦ £1,700 (Approx) ♦ 020 8971 3909 ♦ www.dreamvision.net

Dreaming of a cheaper DLP



This entry-level DreamVision projector incorporates a number of new technologies. Alvin Gold draws the curtains and dims the lights...



DreamVision is a French projector manufacturer of some repute. The Dreamy is its new entry level DLP model. The particular optical chip at its core is the latest generation DarkChip 2, which is a native widescreen processor with 854 x 480 (480p) pixel resolution, which means that even DVD (PAL 576p) requires scaling down to fit the resolving ability of the chip.

The construction of the DarkChip 2 is optimised for maximum contrast, which at a claimed 2,400:1 is impressive at this price level. The Dreamy is also home to Texas Instruments' latest integrated control processor – the DDP2000 – which interfaces tightly with the optical DMD (Digital Mirror Device) and provides its own scaling, deinterlacing, and 3:2 and 2:2 pulldown, along with such tasks as keystone and handling of onscreen menus and other housekeeping tasks. The benefit is to reduce the complexity and cost of nailing a projector together.

Compact and discreet

The Dreamy is a compact design supplied with a soft carry case and a useful range of adaptors and connectors. As often happens with compacts, the ventilation system has to work overtime to keep the projector running at a safe temperature, and this means an optical assembly with significant light spill. Happily, fan noise levels, and more importantly the character of the noise from the cooling system, are benign, even at full brightness.

The model is equipped with a range of analogue inputs, including component and

a D15 RGB computer interface. There is also a DVI input with HDCP support which means the Dreamy will work with DVD players sporting DVI or HDMI outputs, as well as Sky's forthcoming HD set-top box.

The problem is that the limited resolution of this PJ's chipset means that although you'll see a picture, you won't benefit from HD broadcast's extra resolution. The control system is easy to operate, the only obvious gotcha being the auto source feature, which searches for a new input if the current one is switched off. You can lock an input selection, but this presents problems when legitimately changing the selected source.

Optimising performance

Out of the box my Dreamy sample came with a peculiar adjustment: whites were reproduced as yellow, and there was a gamma curve that needed extensive

tweaking to produce an acceptably balanced result.

However, once optimised (see Practical tip), its performance rates well. The Dreamy's principal strength is that it is unusually bright and contrasty, and as a result it is useable in rooms with subdued lighting, such as typical daylight use with the curtains drawn. The whites, once the colour temperature has been properly set, are pure and intense, though it was quite easy to 'burn out' shades of near white if the settings were overcooked. Black levels are even more impressive, with contrast level and shadow detail the equal of typical DLP projectors introduced two years ago, and costing two or three times as much.

Where the Dreamy is less impressive is in its handling of moving images. Significant levels of 'staircasing' of diagonal picture elements were

LAB REPORT

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Colour		✓		
Geometry		✓		
Contrast		✓		
Resolution		✓		

HCC PRACTICAL TIP

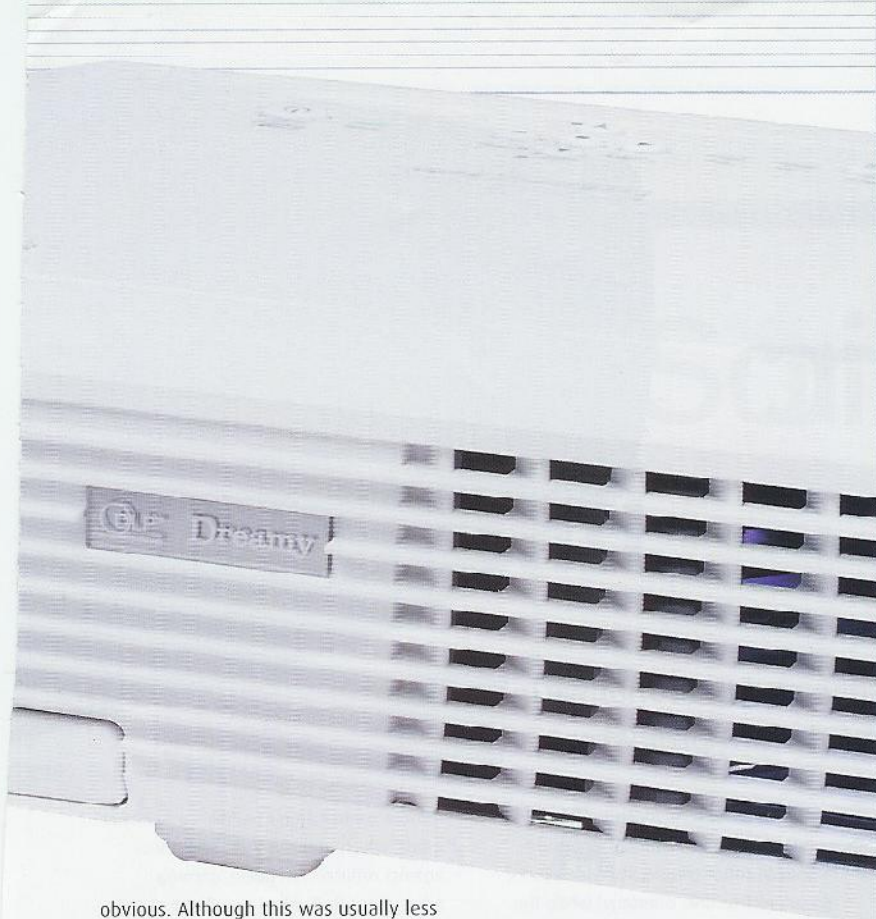
Expect to invest some time setting up the DreamVision Dreamy for optimum colour balance and contrast. We found that the unit needed several hours of use before it settled down to give an acceptable balance, even once the colour settings had been optimised. It has been noted previously that projectors have finite warm-up times before they are at their best, and similar observations are common with amplifiers, CD players and loudspeakers. Of course it doesn't take long to get the necessary hours clocked up, but it is something to consider, and makes it difficult to expect a meaningful shop demonstration unless the dealer has a sample that has been run in.

SPECIFICATIONS

ITEM	SUPPORT	DETAILS
HD Ready	×	Useful DVI input, undermined by chip
Progressive scan	○	Compatible with 480p & 576p
Composite	○	1 input
S-video	○	1 input
Component	○	1 input
HDMI/DVI	○	1 DVI input with HDCP encryption
VGA	○	1 input
Resolution		854 x 480 WVGA native widescreen
Brightness		850 ANSI Lumens (claimed)
Contrast		2,400:1 (claimed)
Dimensions		277(w) x 105(h) x 236(d)mm
Weight		2.4kg

Also featuring

HD+ DarkChip 2 TI DMD; six-segment colour wheel; vertical keystone adjust; vertical picture shift; lens: f2.6-f2.8; optical zoom 1.87-2.25x distance/width (1.2:1 zoom ratio); colour temperature 6500-9500°K; lamp 200W/160W dual mode; rated lifetime 1,500hrs (standard mode), 2,000hrs (lampsaver mode); TI DDP2000 controller/deinterlacer ASIC with integral scaling and 3:2 and 2:2 pulldown



obvious. Although this was usually less of an issue with normal programme material, the Dreamy lacked the fluid ease of the best projectors in the sub-£2,000 class, and there was a hint of milkiness from the lens. By contrast, video noise is well suppressed, and text handling is good.

Onscreen resolution is typical of many budget projectors, and better than many LCD models, while brightness is high, alongside the best comparable LCDs. Contrast is outstanding at this price level. Dynamically, the picture is less impressive, and it is disappointing that the new highly integrated approach that TI has rolled out in the DDP2000 to support its low cost DLP chips is inferior to well implemented versions of the Faroudja DCDi (the industry standard) used on equivalent models from other marques. Although unsuitable for HD sources, the Dreamy's performance with standard DVB digital TV and DVD is pleasing.

Conclusion

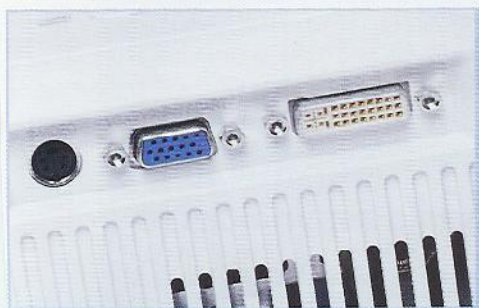
The Dreamy is an interesting addition to the affordable end of the projector market, although it's no class leader. A quick comparison with the ScreenPlay 7200 shows superior onscreen resolution (720p) from the latter, and better deinterlacing from its Faroudja processor, but the Dreamy has a more punchy image, with better black levels, and more subtlety in the mid colours – flesh tones, for example. I guess, you pay your money and takes your choices... ■

RATINGS

Highs: Bright, punchy image, DVI with HDCP

Lows: Resolution of the chosen DMD, which reduces detail from PAL DVDs

Picture	★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Features	★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★



The DVI input with HDCP sets the Dreamy up nicely for HD broadcasts



Like the unit itself, the remote is compact and well-engineered